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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a model that builds on the assumption that educators teaching foundations of education courses have a unique opportunity to model the democratic process and a moral responsibility to infuse the art of human conversation and self-transcendence into education. Exposure to such classes may encourage preservice teachers to go beyond the search for pedagogical recipes and reflect on larger metaphysical responsibilities. The educational practice model presented here has philosophical connections to Shor's liberating education. It recognizes teaching and learning opportunities inherent in the flow of energy released by the seemingly chaotic elements comprising a classroom with open boundaries. It seeks a classroom community of inquiry based on a dialogical structure that allows individuals and groups to express different perspectives and interests but also encourages them to participate in a dialogue across difference aimed at formulating a democratic educational climate. The paper describes how education must be full of meaning in order to be meaningful, explaining how this can occur in democratic classrooms. It presents five theoretical positions about learning in democratic classrooms. It concludes that to search out and define the foundational principles upon which a personal teaching methodology rests is a continuing process that involves reflection on possibilities. (Contains 47 references.) (SM)

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Lift Every Voice and Sing: Democratic Dialogue in a Teacher Education Classroom

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An Opening Question: "What's Going On Here?"

It is a quickly learned fact of academic life that writing down thoughts for dissemination to a self-selected audience often results in the time-honored experience of "preaching to the choir." So why do it? It may be because those experiences may translate into opportunities for the preacher and the choir to reflect together on important questions about <u>why</u> we do <u>what</u> we do. Such moments of reflection, a "reconstruction of experience" in John Dewey's words, are necessary for intellectual - and moral - growth. The concept of *praxis* - a currently "in" word in education, philosophy, and theology - reminds us that reflective thinking should always be a prelude to action.[1]

I recently found ample rationale - but less time - to engage in serious reflection on my pedagogical action in the classroom, and on the educational philosophy undergirding the method. Students in a specific class were having difficulty adjusting to the free-wheeling, open-ended, critical/interpretive process of discussion/dialogue/debate which was being encouraged. It rapidly became apparent that the students needed a little practice in praxis. They needed a chance to slow down, take a deep breath, to stretch intellectual muscles, and to "think on these things." They needed to reflect - individually and as a learning community - on the philosophical <u>why</u> of an instructional method that

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encouraged intellectual dissent, and that challenged silent - some socially/politically silenced - voices to join the educational chorus -- to *"lift every voice and sing"*[2]

To facilitate a reflective process for this particular learning community I put in writing a descriptive interpretation of a *Teaching/Learning Model* titled - only half-humorously - "Hey! What the Heck's Going On Here?" Here was a discussion tool to help us all - students and teacher - analyze the classroom climate and instructional method. It is this model that has been expanded upon for this paper.

A basic premise of the model builds on the assumption that one who teaches any of the so-called "foundations of education" classes has a unique opportunity, and a special responsibility to model a democratic process. There is a philosophical connection to John Goodlad's statement that

> (t)he schools will be weak instruments . . . if their teachers are prepared primarily in the mechanics of presenting information and managing classrooms. They must be deeply immersed in the meaning of democratic character and the knowledge domains of the human conversation. More, they must possess the caring pedagogical skills, traits, and dispositions that guiding self-transcendence of the young requires. They must, too, be vigilant stewards of schools that model the qualities of civility and civitas desired in the young. (Goodlad, 1998,20)

The foundations teacher has an opportunity - perhaps a moral responsibility - to infuse the *art* of human conversation and self-transcendence into the mechanistic, "how to do it," *science* of education. A foundations class is uniquely suited to help the future teacher better understand the "self" and the "other" (person, idea, group, or ideology)

through issue oriented give-and-take in a democratically constructed classroom.[3] Exposure to such classes may encourage teachers-to-be to go beyond the search for pedagogical recipes, and to reflect on larger metaphysical responsibilities. They may find meaning in Ira Shor's challenge:

> Teachers have a long-term responsibility to initiate and direct (a) liberating class . . . (L)iberating education is not a lecture on freedom, democracy, or domination. It is an educational practice which disconfirms the unequal relations dominant in society and in the classroom. (Shor, 1987, xii-xiii)

The educational practice model here presented has philosophical connections to Shor's "liberating education." The model is based on certain philosophical/educational assumptions regarding teaching/learning. It recognizes the teaching and learning possibilities inherent in the "flow of energy"[4] released by the seemingly chaotic elements comprising a classroom with open boundaries; a classroom in which the instructor accepts - even courts - the personal and pedagogical risks inherent in the intrusion of the unplanned and unknown into the dialogue.

It has been suggested by some critics of teacher education programs that the education of K-12 educators is all too often an institutionally prescribed exercise in concrete thinking. Students expect, school systems demand, accrediting agencies require, and professors of education whip-up recipes and replicable step-by-step procedures to produce "best teaching practices."[5] The empiricist educational philosophy that for decades has represented the official voice of an educational establishment continues to

result in maximizing the measurably scientific - and minimizing the creatively artistic in both the "official language" of education and the methodology of teaching practice.[6]

Courses that comprise the "foundations of education" are well situated to provide a counterpoint to the empiricist, corporate-inspired model that defines the dominant educational philosophy today. In a teacher education program it is the foundations teacher who often must grab his/her philosophical sling-shot and assume the *persona* of a metaphorical David in a land of pedagogically expert giants.[7] The battle is one in which students must be won over to the understanding that "ideas have consequences," and do relate to - and enrich the pragmatics of - teacher practice. The foundations teacher places the hermeneutical *art* of interpreting philosophical, political, historical, and sociological aspects of education in juxtaposition to the *science* of teaching -- lesson preparation formulas, prescribed techniques, and measurable outcomes. Both sides of the pedagogical coin are important, but there must be continual reminders that a teacher education program is incomplete and intellectually emaciated without its "foundations."

So "what the heck's going on" in a foundations class that proposes to "lift every voice" - even the discordant and out of tune - and bring multiple student perspectives into the classroom dialogue? We are building on John Dewey's stated belief that the democratic community is both "sustaining of, and sustained by" its members. We respond to Dewey's recognition that "full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social group (classroom) to which he belongs."[8] We seek a classroom "community of inquiry" based on a dialogical structure that allows "individuals and groups to express different perspectives and interests but also participate

in a dialogue across difference aimed at formulating a democratic educational (climate)." (Carlson, 343)

We move from a Modernist mindset - in which every question leads to a correct answer - to a Postmodern vision in which a question is a prelude to emerging possibility. We encourage the students to "live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answers." (Rainer Marie Rilke, quoted in Powell, 8).

The broader purpose of education - and of a specific classroom setting - may be interpreted as being *either/or* or *both/and* in terms of an educational "process/product" dichotomy. Within this educational interpretation educational purpose is not circumscribed by a narrow definition. A process purpose for a particular learning community may be articulated as being to encourage the co-learners - students and teacher - to seek knowledge of both "self" and "other" through issue-oriented dialogue/discussion/debate. This involves posing issues which raise the possibilities for divergent (vs. convergent) questions worthy not just of cognitive consideration, but of emotionally charged discussion.

Teaching in this contextual arena is a democratic activity that encourages and expects student "saying" about what is known/thought/felt/believed/hoped for. It is equally important for the teacher to stress "active/reflective listening." This requires a willingness on the part of the listener/learner to cultivate the ability to actively HEAR - not just passively listen to - what the other person is saying. It involves a process defined in Buddhist spirituality as "compassionate listening," in which "we learn to listen deeply . . . (to) make every effort to keep communications open." (Hanh, 95) Too often voices

that are "different" - that have dissimilar social/cultural tonal quality - are tuned-out in the classroom. In the democratic classroom, however, both teacher and students are called upon to reexamine relationships and to establish ways to affirm and validate every person's voice.[9]

MeaningFULL Education

Education to be meaningful must be *full of meaning*. To deal dialogically (vs. ideologically)[10] with meaningful issues in a democratic learning community we begin with the assumption that "meaning" (reality) is often in the eye of the beholder. It is hard to listen - much less to *hear* - when a personal meaningFULL idea, belief, or fact is being aggressively challenged. This is particularly so if we assume the challenge to be he result of an unreflective, closed-minded interpretation based on "orthodoxies of information."[11]

My perception of who I am, of who you are, and of the world we both live in, is filtered through the often clouded lens of an unreflective, subjective mindset. My way of thinking/feeling/knowing/doing . . . even, of *being*, is influenced by assumptions underlying my worldview - my philosophy of life. It is at this point that we look to *moral thinking* in the democratic classroom to open up the possibility that we will not only listen to - but also hear - the other person, and/or idea, and/or understanding. This kind of thinking leads to a self-questioning process that asks the "why" of our basic assumptions, and that questions the answers we have been given by some secular or sacred authority. It is a kind of thought process defined as one that "forces students out of their established cognitive frames of references, making them realize that they are able to transcend fixed perspectives." (Gurdin, 242) In *moral thinking* we engage in active/reflective listening, even when it means that what we "hear" represents rational

and/or emotional challenges to our personal basic assumptions about cherished principles, meanings, and life-purposes. This too is learning.

We learn by using our cognitive abilities, but also by adding our emotional "IQ" to the learning equation. (Goleman) Even the emotion of anger - as a "flow of energy" - in a classroom setting may involve a positive learning experience. To be angry - emotionally charged - in challenging the thought of another presupposes that I - perhaps unconsciously - will look closely at my own belief system.[12] At this point I have the opportunity to ask "why?" Why do I believe/think/feel the way I do? If I have chosen to continue to "learn to learn" I will have cause to reflect on those assumptions which provide foundational support for my thinking and doing . . . and being.

Learning is a process in which we develop an evolving awareness of the "self" and the "other." Learning occurs as I grow in the understanding that my "reality" - my authenticity - is contextual. My authentic "self" is in the context of subjective experiences which help define my Truth (or truths), and the parameters of my perceived moral responsibilities. How I interpret the world and other people reflects the questions, issues, concerns, priorities, intentions, and goals of a unique self -- an existential *I*. But -- to be *educated* is to develop an increasing awareness of - and appreciation for - other "realities" and other unique "selves."

In a democratic classroom I can learn from you - even when your ideas, views and knowledge of the Truth are based on what I consider to be faulty assumptions. As I engage in this kind of democratic "listen-hearing-learning" I may listen only enough to reinforce my own perceptions, biases, and assumptions. I may, however, *hear* in such a way as to open my mind to other possibilities. Learning occurs when I compare my

knowledge to your knowledge, and as I compare and connect what we both "know" to larger meanings and purposes which transcend our subjective perceptual/assumptional disagreements.

The teaching/learning model which finds its generating spark from this thinking may not be suited to all academic disciplines or teaching personas. It does, however, relate to an assumption that students in a teacher education program continue to be intellectually, emotionally, and morally "in process" as learners. It is assumed that an individual's continued intellectual/emotional growth involves a willingness to question her/his personal, basic philosophical premises even as he/she challenges the intellectual grounding and emotional strength of the "other's" worldview. It is within the pedagogical parameters of a democratic classroom that such self-questioning and challenging of the other takes place. John Wilkerson has noted that

> facts and values lose their privileged status the moment they are challenged, no matter how true or sacred they may previously have been held to be. They may, of course, be reestablished, and it is the function of dialogue to perform this task. (Wilkerson, 166)

It is in self-questioning dialogue, and the "hearing" of the other's answers to fundamental questions, that rigid epistemological boundaries - the parameters of how and what we know - are opened to new possibilities. Such learning possibilities are actualized within a classroom centered around questions rather than definitive answers, process rather than product, open-ended concepts rather than precepts (facts),[13] imaginative wrestling with truths rather than defining and proselytizing one **T**ruth. In this

classroom there is an echo of the poet's admonition, "Say not 'I have found the truth,' but rather, 'I have found a truth'."(Gibran, 63)

This model will not satisfy the expectations of an empiricist educational philosophy. It does not map out a final knowledge destination. It is not circumscribed by content tied to measurable, concretely testable, objective outcomes. It involves pedagogical risk-taking for the teacher who opens the class to "knowledge as a field of contending interpretations." (Shor, 1987, 15), and to the sharing of hermeneutical possibilities with the students. The model does not demand set-in-stone lesson plans, but rather welcomes those "teaching moments" that - though psychologically discomforting and pedagogically uncertain for the teacher - may make possible the existential reality of one mind penetrating another.

The model being discussed is based on certain philosophical/educational assumptions.[14] These assumptions became apparent when the light of reflective thought was allowed to shine upon the educational process in one particular classroom. As I allowed myself to "hear" what was happening in the classroom I was able to translate the message to the written "model." This allowed teacher and students to analyze the process. I noticed that there was "method in my instructional madness." My classroom methodology was influenced by: (1) John Dewey's concept of the classroom as a democratic community - a microcosm of the larger social/political macrocosm (Dewey), (2) Postmodernist philosophical thinking applied to education (Doll, Slattery), and (3) the educational theory underpinning Critical Pedagogy (Freire, McLaren, Oldenski).

Reflection upon "what was happening" in the classroom revealed a teaching methodology built upon a scaffolding of interwoven ideas appropriated from the three

influences.[15] There was an "assumption" that what was happening in the classroom could be interpreted - perhaps understood and accepted - in light of theoretical positions. It is, however, important to remember that a classroom is a place of complexity, ambiguity, inconsistency, and imperfection, and that "no theory ever solves all the puzzles with which it is confronted at a given time; nor are the solutions achieved often perfect."[16] As Michael Walzer has reminded us, a classroom that "theory could fully grasp and neatly explain would not, I suspect, be a pleasant place. (found in Blacker, 181) It is with this philosophically postmodern caveat in mind that the following theoretical premises are offered for reflective contemplation.

Five Theoretical Positions

1. Positive learning takes place not just in the stable, orderly, controlled, linear, sequential, mechanistically "lawful" environment of the traditional classroom; but also in those situations which are open, fluid, dynamic, everchanging - even educationally "chaotic."

A classroom modeled on "means-ends" determinism - and pedagogically predicated on a Modernist scientific worldview of predictability, certainty, and stability - is not the only environment in which learning takes place. A "learning" classroom may be modeled on a Postmodern worldview in which the uncertain combination of ambiguity, randomness, and contestable knowledge challenges the students (and teacher) to think -- to think reflectively. And . . . in John Dewey's words,

> reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because . . . it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended

> during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful . . . To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry - these are the essentials of thinking.
> (Dewey, 1910, 13)

A *thinking* learning environment does not have to be a model of teacher orchestrated predictable consistency, note taking decorum. regulated time sequences, and precisely defined behavioral and testable expectations. Classroom learning is not confined to those hermetically sealed intellectual hothouses that are designed to keep out all interference with the transmission of official knowledge - and all challenges to the teacher's power and authority. Breaking the seal and allowing the winds of unpredictability, uncertainty, the unplanned - even the intellectually disruptive - into the rarified intellectual atmosphere may actually stimulate a communal thinking process.

This, of course, involves risks for the teacher; risks that many are unprepared for and/or unwilling to take. Patrick Slattery helps us recognize that a classroom atmosphere impregnated by the postmodern " . . . encourages chaos, non-rationality, and zones of uncertainty because the complex order existing in the classrooms and in human persons is the place where critical thinking, reflective intuition, and global problem-solving will flourish." (Slattery, 620) The risks involved in opening doors to pedagogical "zones of uncertainty" may be minimized if the teacher "leads and directs . . . but does so democratically with the participation of the students, balancing the need for structure with the need for openness." (Shor, 16) We recognize that "structure, balance, and respect are critical components in . . . a democratic learning environment." (Ellsworth. 66)

Leading, balancing, structuring, and respecting lessens the risks when we enter the postmodern "zones of uncertainty" in an open classroom, but does not eliminate them.

> First and foremost (teachers) have to model the attitudes and skills of democratic leadership . . . They must also have the patience and understanding to live through and help correct the blunders, distortions, and outright sabotage that will inevitably occur. (Arnstine, 145)

In the democratic classroom students will be challenged to engage in continuous learning activity that stimulates and is stimulated by, cultivates and is cultivated by, and facilitates and is facilitated by, a critical hermeneutical awareness. This awareness will be intensified through "encounter" - a process of questioning, challenging, evaluating, and making decisions regarding the "self" and the "other." In these encounters traditional boundaries of "how to learn" in the classroom will be violated. Michael Crichton provides the educator with a way to assess the "chaotic" in such teaching/learning encounters.

> Real life (i.e. in the classroom) isn't a series of interconnected events occurring one after another like beads strung on a necklace. Life is a series of encounters in which one even may change those following in a wholly unpredictable, even (chaotic) way. (Crichton, 171)

It is true that a democratic classroom does not fit a behaviorist model of pedagogically conditioned consistency and predictability. An "I-Thou" encounter (Buber,1958) - two *subjects* interacting - may be preliminary to the unpredictable. But the unpredictable may be prelude to the intellectually creative.

2. Learning is an event that flows from both the intellect and the emotions..

Learning occurs both cognitively and affectively. The emotions influence the *how*, the *what*, and the *why* of learning.[17] Emotions enter the classroom learning environment whenever stimulating issues are raised. Therefore, it is

> necessary to share the feelings aroused by subject matter within the members of a particular class or learning group. Such subjects (may) arouse immense anger, sadness, defensiveness, and guilt. It is important to process these feelings and to help the students find their way beyond them to understanding. (Neimiroff, 78)

The development of neither intellectual or emotional understanding is helped when the teacher assumes a Sgt. Friday role and admonishes students to simply "stick to the facts."[18] Facts become meaningful and are "understood" when seen through the lens of emotion. A student - when defending his/her "facts," or challenging another's facts - brings emotion into the interpretive equation. When a teacher refuses to legitimize the emotional context of a discussion she/he may negate the importance of - or completely silence - a student voice.

An empiricist educational philosophy has conditioned many teachers to minimize feelings and the emotional content of learning. How do you quantify an emotion? How do you measure an "emotional" educational objective? To refuse to admit emotion into the academic arena is to cut students off from the vitality that emotion/feeling can bring to a classroom. To be aware of this is to understand Mary Wollstonecraft, the eighthteen century grandmother of today's feminist movement, when she wrote about "those half alive beings who seem to have been made by Prometheus when the fire he store from

Heaven was so exhausted that he could only spare a spark to give life, not animation, to inert clay. (Wollstonecraft, 314)

The democratic classroom does not deny- but actively encourages - the use of "controlled" feeling and emotion to add intensity to intellectual discussion. We are reminded that in such a classroom students "feel safe to express ideas (and emotions) and know that they are heard, even when expressing unpopular or unusual views." (Downs-Lombardi, 69)

3. Learning is a product of human relationships, both the cooperative and the conflicted.

Intellectual conflict - open challenges, questions, strongly expressed opposing views, dynamic interchanges - may shake up classroom decorum, but may also be preludes to intellectual reflection. Human encounter is an experience that facilitates learning. Conflict in the classroom is not all bad. In the classroom we may learn from the experience of "dialogical conflict" to develop the skill to divorce the conflict from the person, and to remain connected as caring human beings.[19] We may learn (grow, develop, change) even in situations which frustrate and anger us - i.e. emotionally charged classroom interchanges. This positive growth happens *IF* we remain open to the possibility of new insight, new awareness, and to the learning potential of legitimate challenges to our philosophical assumptions.

When we disagree - have conflicted dialogue based on differing fundamental assumptions - it is possible to turn the disagreement into a learning situation. "The teacher must never forget that conflicts too, if only they are decided in a healthy atmosphere, have an educational value." (Buber, 1965, 107) In such an atmosphere there is concern for the personhood (dignity) of the other. This concern is expressed in the

classroom through a dialogical process in which teacher and students become mutual learners by way of an I-Thou relationship.[20] The concern is expressed within a participatory and exploratory classroom in which the individual is treated as not just the recipient (object) of transmitted knowledge, but as the interpreter (subject) of knowledge and the creator of new possibilities. Each person is affirmed in her/his unique personhood through a relational/interactive pedagogy.

An issues oriented class requires an effort on the part of the teacher to create a classroom atmosphere in which *democratic community* (as in learning community) overcomes *conflict* (as in factional discord). This is not easy, but it may help to keep in mind that

> conflict need not be destructive . . . Although universal, conflict is not universally bad. There are positive functions served by it. Conflict may be a stimulus for social change. Without the stimulus of conflict, without the pressures for innovation and change, social organizations run the risks of ossifying and becoming rigid forms ill adapted to changing circumstances . . . Hence conflict is an inevitable prerequisite of social solidarity and cannot be erased from the human situation. (Lee, 4-5)

The creative, innovative, educative use of conflict, however, can only be achieved in a "just" classroom. Justice in the classroom is related to the quality of relationships, the equity of expectations, and the reality of responsibilities. Justice is a reflection of the power structure in the classroom. Teacher power may be just or unjust as exercised

through the selection of class content and textbooks, assignments, grading procedures, teacher questions, instructional methodology, etc. Peter McLaren reminds us that

> in a classroom setting, dominant educational discourses determine what books we may use, what classroom approaches we should employ (mastery learning, Socratic method, etc.), and what values and beliefs we should transmit to our students. (McLaren, 184)

Teacher power in the just classroom involves a pedagogical practice that translates Martin Buber's theoretical, theological "I-Thou" into the pragmatics of educational practice. Paulo Freire has translated Buber's theological existentialism into pedagogical possibility:

> (I)t enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and alienating intellectualism; it also enables people (students) to overcome their false perception of reality. The world . . . becomes the object of that transforming action by (students/teacher) which results in their humanization. (Freire, 1993, 61)

The just classroom is a place of transformation, of humanization. It is a place of active learning - of facilitation not teacher domination. It is a place where the teacher allows and encourages "every voice to sing. The accompanying intellectual discord is rearranged into a harmony of divergent chords. The just, democratic, classroom empowers even the most voiceless student to explore possibilities of self-expression. The teacher in such a classroom is Socratic in giving birth to - drawing out - hard

questions, student generated issues, epistemological options related to student "lived realities," and challenges to the teacher's interpretation of "the truth."

4. Learning flows from a "pedagogical partnership in which teacher and students *share* responsibility for the birth and continued growth of a learning community.

Some students may not want partnership, may even resent - try to reject it. Shared responsibility for learning may be an alien concept. Years of strict hierarchical, top-down, non-democratic experiences of "knowledge absorption" in the classroom will predispose would-be learners to a "teacher gives - students receive" mentality. This flies in the face of a "pedagogical partnership" in which the student also assumes a role as "giver." There is, of course, a "catch." In assuming this active role in a classroom the student accepts a responsibility for the quality of the gift. It is easier to sit back and passively receive than it is to actively give generously and qualitatively.

Partnership - the experience of mutual learning - challenges a traditional educational hegemonic structure in which all power is in the hands of the teacher. The teacher controls content, methodology, grades, and classroom structure. A partnership is revolutionary in that it involves a redistribution of power. Partnership transforms the relationship between teacher and student from one that is informative/unilateral to one that is transactive/bilateral.

Partnership makes everyone in the classroom an "intellectual explorer" with all the possibility for adventure that the term "explorer" conveys. It also exposes the explorer to the risks and uncertainties that makes the intellectual exploration an adventure.[21] It means exploring intellectual terrain without the usual maps marking specific routes to a predetermined destination. The rules of the road are ambiguous. It means the guide

frequently asking, "shall we go this way or that way; who wants to lead?" It challenges preconceived theories about how to travel the pedagogical road. But . . . a "pedagogical partnership" is a legitimate *way* - a road to learning.

5. The individual is important, and the community of learners is important; but learning in a classroom is significantly affected by outside forces.

These forces - economic, political, cultural, religious, social - influence the worldview and belief system of each individual within the learning community. Individual worldviews affect student/teacher and student/student relationships in the classroom. Each of us brings different experiences, cultural mores, ands ways of knowing into the classroom. Each of us brings a set of philosophical, theological,and political assumptions into the classroom. These assumptions become ideological motivations - some consciously expressed, some unconsciously influencing an individual's interpretations and contributions to open classroom dialogue.

Ideological assumptions are reflected in axiological judgments regarding values - what is good or bad, right or wrong. These value judgments, though personal in expression, are socially constructed - based upon an individual's experiences within the broader social milieu. Vernon Van Dyke reminds us that

> differing sensitivities are closely associated with different values and interests . . . Numerous influences are at work when people select the values and interests they endorse. Personal advantage is one consideration. Social background plays a role - the influence of family and social class. Special experience . . . religious conviction . . . ethnic or national identity and commitment play a role . . . The

> only formula I have to offer concerning ideological differences is that we ought to . . . seek greater knowledge . . . of the various ideological outlooks, including our own . . . knowledge that tends to reduce disagreements and make differences less disagreeable. (Van Dyke, 130)

The opportunity for learning is enhanced in the pedagogically free-wheeling foundations classroom where a discussion-dialogue-conversational teaching methodology encourages differing sensitivities to be recognized and appreciated. This requires being aware of, and sensitive to, the numerous influences - social, political, economic, gender, cultural, racial, religious - that create ideological differences which permeate the classroom atmosphere.

It is also important to be conscious of the real and perceived sense of economic, and/or social, and/or political inequities that influence discussion in an issues-oriented classroom. There should be intellectual and emotional recognition of the "lived realities" of individual students and of the social/economic"groups" to which they belong. In such a classroom setting it may be possible to transform ideological closed-mindedness into dialogical/dialectical opportunities. We will hear echoes of Paulo Freire's educational philosophy in our pedagogical "attempts to grapple with a number of pivotal issues currently engaged by critical scholars who have set out to refine and develop a critical pedagogy attentive to the changing face of social, cultural, gender and global relations." (Freire in Oldenski, 74)

Conclusion

This paper represents an attempt to objectify the subjective: to create a written academic model from personal reflective moments. It speaks to the often unrealized

opportunity that exists for a teacher to reflect upon the foundational principles (often unrecognized) that inform his/her teaching methodology. Such principles provide structural support for the building of an individual's personal philosophy of education. Here are sources of rechargeable intellectual and emotional energy that may be harnessed to generate the power of a personal pedagogical practice.

There is, however, a caveat to be considered. To search out, and define, the foundational principles upon which a personal teaching methodology rests is a continuing process. It involves reflection on possibilities. It is a meditative, ruminative . . . even speculative process. Foundations may be shored up, rebuilt, even replaced. There is no "now and forever" pedagogical, capital-T-Truth to be translated into an absolute, immutable "best practice" in the classroom.

There are subtle definitional differences in such a "truth;" depending on time, place, people, events, and emerging epistemological interpretations. There is, however, the stimulation of continuing intellectual struggle. It is such a struggle that is implicit in the democratic classroom in which open-ended dialogue allows and encourages every voice to "sing."

> Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather, I have found a truth."
> Say not, "I have found the path of the soul." Say rather, "I have
> met the soul walking upon my path." For the soul walks upon all paths.
> The soul walks not upon a line, neither does it grow like a reed."
> The soul unfolds itself, like a lotus of countless petals. (Gibran, 63)

Notes

1. It is important for teachers to continually engage in educational *praxis* - reflective action; a process in which an individual's teaching practice evolves as the result of continuous reflection. Reflection produces changes in practice, which in turn creates the necessity for new reflection. This might be considered in relationship to John Dewey's concept of "reconstruction of experience," and his belief that reflective thinking "involves a state of doubt." There is, however, a caveat to be considered.

> I challenge any definition or conception of the word *reflection* that suggests simple solutions to the complex job of teaching . . . My challenge is that reflection may not depend on thinking or questioning as usual; it may depend on asking much harder questions - ones that begin with a self-critical, self-conscious awareness and then extend to wider political contexts that include questions about knowledge, power, voice, and position. (Brunner, 47-48)

2. This phrase - borrowed from *The Negro National Anthem* - symbolizes both a political and an educational statement. It recognizes the importance of encouraging all people (in both the political and educational arenas) - particularly those who have felt powerless - to find their voices. In the classroom upon which this model was based there were formerly "silenced" voices - students who indicated they had never before felt comfortable in engaging in class dialogue. Suzanne Rice has noted"

> Educationally, it can be argued that classroom arrangements enabling the voices of those who were previously silenced are potentially beneficial to all the students involved . . . Learning is facilitated when students are free to ask questions, present ideas . . . engage in conversations . . . (reevaluate) beliefs and assumptions, and (formulate) new ideas and further questions. (Rice, 94)

3. When considering the "other" we are also led to consider "otherness," and to give thought to Stephen White's caution that "the issue of *fostering* otherness must become as important as *tolerating* otherness." (White, 117)

4. It may be noted that John Dewey wrote of a "flow of energy" which can be tapped to energize classroom learning. Frijodf Capra - years later, and using the same words with a physicist's inflection - provided a scientific example which may be turned into a metaphor for the democratic interactions encouraged in a "postmodern" classroom:

> The sub-atomic particles are dynamic patterns which do not exist as isolated entities, but as integral parts of an inseparable network of interactions. These interactions involve a ceaseless flow of energy. (Capra, 211)

5. Note three examples of typical indictments regarding "Modern" educational reality:

   (1) "Schools increasingly adopt forms of pedagogy that routinize and standardize classroom instruction." (Aronowitz and Giroux, 23)

   (2) Teacher education programs are failing to develop "the skills of discourse, analysis of conflicting views, compromise . . ." (Goodlad, 1990, 67)

   (3) "Teacher education students tend not to be seekers of alternative ways of seeing . . . Instead they walk into class searching for recipes for information delivery and classroom discipline. Questions of purpose and content are alien (and considered) irrelevant. (Kincheloe, 14)

6. Sue Brooks has issued a warning for foundations teachers: "As we struggle to represent our field . . . we need to hold ourselves to more than the demands of the moment . . . or to the agenda of the educational establishment." (Brooks, 36)

7. This reality has been documented. In one instance an academic journal has devoted a total issue to one professor's battle with the Goliaths of administrative power. In an introduction to the issue Alan Jones wrote that "it is fair to say that (foundations teachers) have experienced . . . marginalization within the teacher education and graduate study process." (Brosio, 4)

8. Found in Rockefeller, 307. Mr. Rockefeller wrote: "In the final analysis, Dewey believed that human beings educated in a genuinely liberating environment will act in a socially responsible fashion because it offers a path to the deepest and richest fulfillment possibilities." (Rockefeller, 308)

9. Hans-Georg Gadamaer - in postmodern fashion -speaks of the validation of diverse voices as "a blending of horizons between particularities." Jurgen Habermas describes a "communicative praxis," and David Tracy writes of an "anological imagination" which he describes as "embracing those who are different." (Knitter, 456) To validate diverse voices also means that

> listening to the voices of others, we also notice the easily forgotten obvious: even when we are speaking the same languages, there are many other "languages" at play behind and within what the speakers mean and what we in turn understand. Becoming aware of the levels of different meanings . . . (we) hear better, comprehend better. (Minnich, 9)

10. To deal dialogically with an issue is to engage in an "I-Thou" encounter, a meaningful dialogue. It is to remain open to new conclusions based on evolving evidence. To deal ideologically with an issue is to argue from a predetermined position that refuses to hear the "other."

> An ideology is an "ism," that is, a philosophical tenet which has been dissociated from the process of investigation and search . . . above all ideology closes the door to search and doubt . . . it forecloses questions . . . The ideologist haws a complete world-system with prefabricated answers, and he is impervious to disconfirming evidence. (Feuer, 188, 193)

We may be reminded, however, that not all writers deal with ideology as a total negative. "As long as you are willing to reconsider your ideology . . . recognizing you might be wrong, you can reasonably claim that you are not doctrinaire, dogmatic, or fanatical. Reasoned analysis, not blind faith, is what you want." (Van Dyke, 2)

11. Ira Shor reminds us that "students should experience relevance . . . and provocative debate, not orthodoxies of information." (Shor, 176)

12. Note one student's comment from a class evaluation: "I usually don't speak up in class. I finally became so angry that I had to respond to David. My anger caused me to come out of my shell, and become part of the class. This eventually helped me to look at my own prejudices, and make some adjustments in my thinking."

13. I am reminded, however, of John Dewey's admonition that we can't challenge and question in a vacuum; we must have something - a fact - to begin with. (paraphrase)

14. It is important for teachers to understand - and reflect on - the assumptions that provide the foundations for their teaching; to become "aware of the ideological and epistemological commitments they tacitly accept by using certain (teaching) models . . .". (Apple and Weis, 18)

15. It should be made clear that "assumptions" are not immutable. They are subject to reevaluation and revision based on new experience and knowledge - and on new interpretations. The democratic classroom will encourage students to continually examine assumptions.

16. Found in Goldman (1989). In his article Goldman reminds us that "a good theory is also good for generating other theories, for exciting inquiry (emphasis added)."

17. For an interpretation of emotions as "a way of knowing" see Daniel Goleman's holistic view of education in which "one solution (to the empiricist model) is a new vision of what schools can do to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom." (Goleman, xiv)

18. Sgt. Friday, from the old *Dragnet* TV series, had much in common with Thomas Gradgrind, the positivist teacher in Charles Dickens' novel, *Hard Times*. "Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else . . . Stick to facts." (Dickens, 11)

19. Jean Miller reflects on conflict:

> All of us . . . are taught to see conflict as frightening and evil. These

> connotations . . . obscure the fundamental nature of reality - the fact that, in its most basic sense, conflict is inevitable, the source of all growth, and an absolute necessity if one is to be alive." (Miller, 125)

20. The *I-Thou* concept, as defined by the Jewish theologian Martin Buber, is important in a teacher/pupil relationship. Buber has, however, reminded that "full mutuality" is not the goal in such a relationship. He writes of a person-to-person encounter that allows unique individual potentials to flourish.

> In order to help the realization of the best potentialities of the pupil's life, the teacher must really mean him as the definite person he is . . . he must be aware of him as a whole being and affirm him in his wholeness. He can only do this if he meets him again and again as his partner in a bipolar situation. (Buber, 132)

21. A significant *risk* for the teacher involved in a democratic, dialogue/discussion methodology has been delineated by C. Roland Christensen:

> If the tone of a class is confrontational, critical, and acerbic students will retreat - all except those who are "red in tooth and claw" . . . Gresham's Law (bad money drives out good) applies to the class that lacks community; the vocally aggressive and personally superconfident "drive out" the contributions of the measured and reflective. (Christensen, 19)

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